

Thursday, August 14, 2014

Afternoon thoughts on what the book is about, point of emphasis:

- MYSTERY (for general public): WHY the arms race, with thousands of (thermo)nuclear weapons remaining, given public assumptions about what nukes are for: deterring nuclear attack (type I deterrence) & York/Bundy requirements: 1-100? I.e., what are nuclear weapons for? What is their relationship to our foreign policy/nuclear weapons and foreign policy (in broadest brush-stroke outlines)
- Answer (to be described): perceived functions, uses, benefits and goals of having nuclear weapons, to bargain, threaten to use; to take risks of catastrophe for instrumental gains by powerful decision-makers (type II deterrence); to back up US interventionary forces overseas, and our first-use threats, by threatening escalatory preemption to first-strike if necessary.
- So, as in Alice in Wonderland, drinking the bottle, down the rabbit hole, blue pill in the matrix (50s & 60s): Everything is not as it appears, but at times the opposite (as in Missile Gap, focus on Soviet threats, but then discover the reality of US threats; but even this represents a life-time of learning, seeking to understand, account for what's happening, it's persistence, violation of criteria of crisis stability, associated with keeping risks low). Take a trip with DE down the rabbit hole/take the blue pill with me.
- Consequences of these often secret goals (and related history of strategic bombing): risking the ultimate catastrophe, with the construction of the Domsday Machines that can end all human life (nuclear winter). Hair-triggers, mousetraps. Toying with the mousetrap(s).
- Central aspects: first-use threats; plans for escalation; how to make the world "safe" for our ~~threats~~ of first-use, to ensure that other side won't respond; question of how to make threats credible, and the risks that this creates, whether individual leaders see themselves as bluffing or not.
- My role in warplanning and crises; and my understanding of these; and how they bear on the risks of the nuclear era, gambling with catastrophe
- Central role of my BNSP guidance in strategic US nuclear war plans right up to the present
- What leaders are willing to do; for things that don't seem to matter very much: Vietnam, Quemoy/Matsu (see Shakespeare's *Hamlet*); what might they be willing to do to defend Western Europe, preserve alliances, influence, profits, power, domestic and allied political coalitions.

- Other thoughts: known for association and opposition to Vietnam War (until Iraq at least (and not including nuclear); greatest foreign policy disaster in US history; but unknown, is that this was decidedly a secondary preoccupation; first association was with the greatest possible catastrophe in human history, the arms race. HOW could Americans, and me specifically come to be involved in this? (Here's where the world of the Matrix and Alice in Wonderland/the Wizard of Oz?, comes in). Especially DE, after early, almost unique introduction to the subject.
- [What's more unusual to be reflected on; America's unique geostrategic insularity, a continental sized-island invulnerable to attack via the air (until ICBMs, 9/11; so a question, not even true for England; how did a country { virtually invulnerable to bombing become the greatest practitioner of strategic bombing, both as reality and threat, in world history)?
- So, Why, how; and what keeps it going? Various answers, but along with the crucial role of vested interests, three factors that allow policies to continue and lower public opposition which might lead to change: secrecy, lies, myths (of empire; see Jack Snyder).
- & last but not least: realistic historical alternatives at different turning points; roads not taken; contrary advice by leading experts, as in Vietnam, etc., and what to do now, today to achieve a minimal moral objective: at the very least, do not have the capability to destroy all life on earth: a specific, achievable, measurable, objective. But hard to do when goals remain the same, first-use threats, drive for strategic superiority (now see NATO expansion, Georgia, Ukraine, etc)